

## A contrastive-constructional approach to (in)subordination: the case of hypothetical manner clauses in French and Spanish

This study investigates hypothetical manner (HM) clauses, i.e. clauses introduced by the conjunction *comme si* in French and *como si* in Spanish (both meaning ‘as if’), as illustrated in [1] to [4]. As previous studies have suggested, clauses introduced by conjunctions can display different degrees of syntactic-discursive (in)dependence (D’Hertefelt 2018, Sansiñena 2019), they can express a range of non-prototypical meanings (Lastres-López 2021), and these features may correlate with their prosodic behaviour (Elvira-García et al. 2017). Thus, our study integrates these three dimensions and provides a fine-grained constructional account of the linguistic phenomena of subordination and insubordination (i.e. “the conventionalized main clause use of what [...] appear to be formally subordinate clauses” (Evans 2007:367)), ultimately aiming to investigate how the latter arises in discourse.

Our usage-based study draws on both spontaneous data, extracted from different corpora (written and spoken), and semi-spontaneous data, obtained from a Discourse Completion Task (Vanrell et al. 2018). In total, around 800 examples were coded for each language and analysed in a three-fold way. First, clefting and proportionality tests (Smessaert et al. 2005) pointed to three degrees of **syntactic (in)dependence** that HM clauses can entertain with their surrounding discourse (i.e. complements [1], non-obligatory adverbials [2] and independent clauses [3-4]). Second, the examples were coded *w.r.t.* their **functional features**, i.e. the semantic values they can express and the discourse functions they can serve. And third, they were investigated in terms of their **prosodic features**, including pitch contours and intonation boundaries of the analysed clauses and their surrounding discourse.

Concerning the results, our study confirms earlier pilot studies (Royo-Viñuales et al. 2021). Small language-specific uses aside (i.e. a unique discourse function only attested in Spanish), the syntactic-functional analyses yield a shared constructional typology of HM clauses in both languages. First, they proved to move beyond the prototypical expression of ‘hypothetical manner’ [2] by encompassing other semantic values (namely ‘hypothetical cause’ [1] and different speaker attitudes), in combination with a range of discourse functions (e.g. ‘elaboration/reformulation’ [3] and ‘assumption denying’ [4]). Interestingly, some semantic-discursive values (e.g. ‘hypothetical cause’ [1]) are found to be equally conveyed by (in)subordinate clauses, whereas other values exclusively belong to either category. For example, while the expression of ‘manner’ (representational level) is restricted to subordinate clauses, an ‘assumption-denying’ value (Brinton 2014) is only attested in insubordinate cases.

Moreover, this study reveals some correlations between prosodic configurations of HM clauses and their degree of syntactic-discursive (in)dependence, as syntactically-dependent clauses are generally found to be prosodically integrated in the same intonation unit with their matrix. In addition, it also sheds clear light on how insubordinate constructions arise in discourse. Crucial in this respect are bridging contexts (Evans and Wilkins 2000:550) which contextually support both a ‘manner’ and a ‘denial’ reading, illustrated in [2]. The analysis shows that a significant number of subordinate clauses like [2] display a rising-falling pitch contour, which is also widely attested in insubordinate clauses conveying ‘denial of an assumption’ in the two languages. This finding thus supports Van linden & Van de Velde’s (2014) hypothesis of insubordination arising through a process of hypoanalysis (Croft 2000) and shows that speakers do reanalyse this contextual meaning as an inherent semantic property of the subordinating conjunction, allowing insubordinate uses to appear in discourse.

## Examples:

- [1] *Ma voiture ne démarre pas. C'est **comme si** elle n'avait plus de batterie.* (frTenTen17)  
'My car isn't starting. It's as if it ran out of battery.'
- [2] *Me daba consejos **como si** me importase su opinión.* (DCTask example)  
'He was giving me advise as if I cared what s/he thinks.'
- [3] *Avec lui, je parle avec un débit normal. **Comme si** je parlais avec toi.* (ParCoLab)  
'With him, I speak at a normal speech rate. As if I was speaking to you.'
- [4] *¡**Como si** yo tuviese una cámara!* (esTenTen18)  
'As if I had a camera!'

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